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Response by official statistics to the Sustainable Development Goals

Eurostat's role in the development and implementation of a comprehensive monitoring framework for Sustainable Development Goals

Note by Eurostat

Summary

The paper describes Eurostat's role in monitoring the European Union Sustainable Development Strategy since 2006 and coordinating activities within the European Statistical System. The paper also outlines the role that Eurostat expects to play once the Post-2015 Development Agenda will be formally adopted.

The paper is presented for discussion to the second session of the Conference of European Statisticians' seminar "Response by official statistics to the Sustainable Development Goals".

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I. Eurostat's activities related to measuring sustainable development

1. In recent years, Eurostat has contributed in various ways to the on-going work on the Post-2015 Development Agenda by cooperating with the United Nations and participating in the Friends of the Chair Group (FoC) on broader measures of progress. Eurostat is fully committed to contributing to the process of establishing a new monitoring framework for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

2. To support the monitoring of SDGs, Eurostat can rely on its many years of experience in monitoring sustainable development at the level of the European Union, which is an important part of the European Statistical Programme as well as of the system of methodologies for statistics, accounts and indicators.

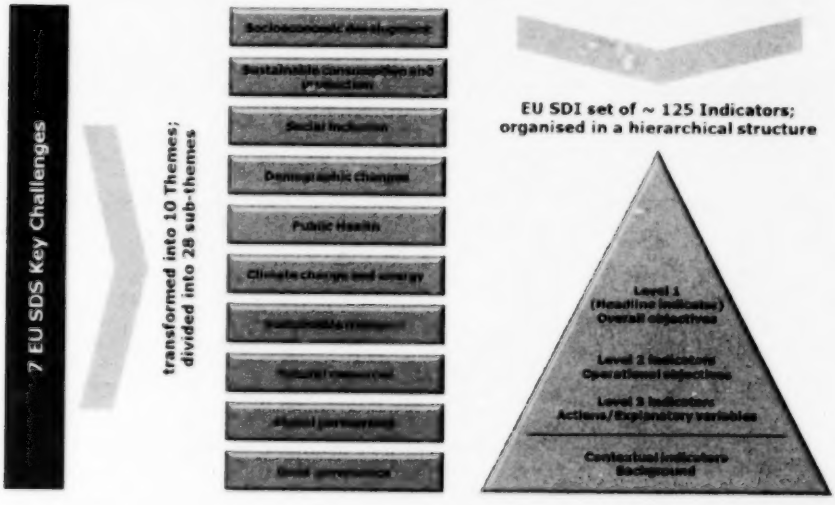
3. Eurostat has a consolidated monitoring experience, based on the activities it carries out since several years to assess progress towards the targets of European strategies such as the European Union Sustainable Development Strategy (EU SDS) and Europe 2020. Activities to measure well-being beyond GDP and Quality of Life also contribute to Eurostat's expertise when it comes to defining a monitoring framework for SDGs.

1. Monitoring the European Union Sustainable Development Strategy

4. The EU SDS was adopted in 2001 by the European Council and reviewed in 2006. Eurostat regularly monitors this strategy and publishes biennial monitoring reports since 2005. The last edition of the SDS monitoring report dates from December 2013. A new edition will be published in the first week of September 2015.

5. The indicator framework for monitoring the EU SDS, and the EU Sustainable Development Indicator set, includes 125 indicators covering 10 themes structured in 3 levels as shown in the figure 1.

Figure 1
The structure of the EU SDI set managed by Eurostat



6. Most of the data used to compile the indicators stem from the standard Eurostat collection of statistics through the European Statistical System (ESS), but other data sources are also used, notably other European Commission services, data from the European Environmental Agency (EEA) and Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).

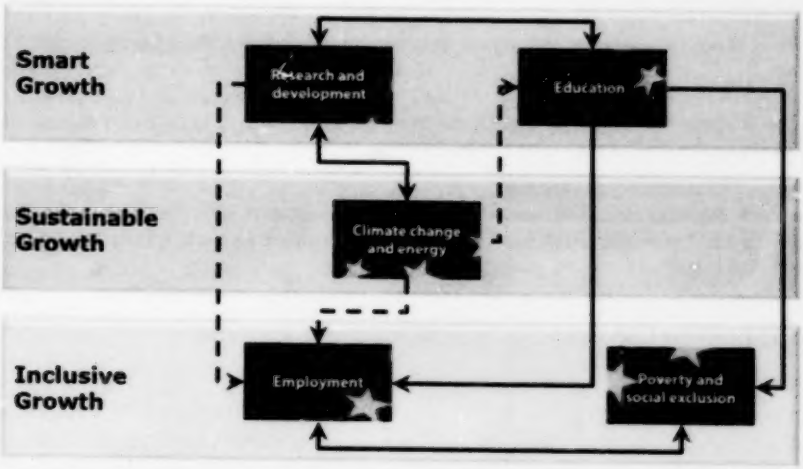
7. With the launch of SDGs, Eurostat assumes to continue monitoring progress towards sustainable development in Europe (see chapter II).

2. Monitoring the Europe 2020 strategy

8. Europe 2020 is the EU integrated long-term strategy for jobs and growth. In this context, growth has three connotations: smart, sustainable and inclusive (see figure 2).

9. The strategy has 5 headline targets, two of which are split in several components. In total, the strategy includes 8 quantified targets. Targets are set for the EU as a whole and separately Member States set national targets.

Figure 2
Indicator framework for the Europe 2020 monitoring



10. In practice Eurostat monitors progress towards the Europe 2020 targets through a set of 9 headline and 4 sub-indicators.

11. Several dissemination products such as a paper publication "*Smarter, greener, more inclusive? — Indicators to support the Europe 2020 strategy*" (biennial for 2013 and 2015 - yearly from next year), wiki articles (Statistics Explained), visual tools (maps, interactive charts) and a detailed online database provide statistical support to monitor progress towards the targets, with the aim to reach a wide and diversified public. Also a video is planned for the end of 2015.

12. Currently a review process of the Europe 2020 strategy is on-going. The outcomes of this review will inform about any future changes in priorities in the delivery of the Europe 2020 strategy.

24. Attempts to look at inter-linkages and overlaps between goals and targets of the OWG proposal had already been undertaken by Sustainable Development Solution Network (SDSN)[4] and others, but more work is needed in this direction.

25. Eurostat is currently undertaking a thorough mapping between the goals and targets of the OWG proposal and two existing conceptual frameworks, the one proposed in the CES *Recommendations on measuring sustainable development* and the current EU SDI set.

26. As this work has just started, Eurostat is not yet able to anticipate any possible results. But the figure below may serve as a visualisation of the expected outcome of this exercise. It shows the relations between the "Six essential elements for delivering the sustainable development goals" cited in the UN Synthesis report[5] and the goals of the OWG proposal.

Figure 3

Relations between the "6 elements for delivering the SDGs" taken from UN Synthesis report and the 17 goals of the OWG proposal (mapping informally shared between UK Office for National Statistics and Eurostat)

[4] SDSN is a UN initiative launched by UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon in August 2012. SDSN published the most recent version (version 7) of its report on "Indicators and a Monitoring Framework for Sustainable Development Goals: Launching a data revolution for the SDGs" in March 2015.

[5] The road to dignity by 2030: ending poverty, transforming all lives and protecting the planet; Synthesis report of the Secretary-General on the Post-2015 Development Agenda; December 2014

27. Mapping goals and targets against existing frameworks is a way to identify the already available appropriate indicators and at the same time the remaining data gaps. In addition, this approach allows identifying multi-dimensional indicators which can be used to measure several (interlinked or overlapping) targets. In this sense the results of such an exercise can serve two important purposes:

(a) Limited number of indicators: Experience in monitoring sustainable development strategies suggests that the overall number of indicators should remain limited to around 100. A larger set would be difficult to manage and to communicate;

(b) Hierarchy of indicators: Eurostat suggests defining a smaller set of core or headline indicators, and a larger set of supplementary indicators. The former would be the most representative for each goal, while the latter would provide more detail or contextual information.

28. To achieve a complete picture of interlinks and overlaps between the goals and targets of the OWG proposal, further frameworks coming from national and international institutes can be added to the exercise and shared within the forthcoming work of the IAEG-SDG.

IV. Conclusions

29. Eurostat is fully committed to contribute to the process of establishing a monitoring framework for SDGs according to the roadmap approved by the 46th UNSC.

30. Eurostat will actively contribute to the work of the IAEG-SDGs in cooperation with other Directorate Generals of the European Commission and in cooperation with its partners in the European Statistical System.

31. Eurostat supports the idea of establishing a robust and high-quality indicator framework which serves to monitor SDGs at different levels and is kept open to innovation.

32. Based on such an SDG indicator framework and in accordance to the UNSC roadmap, Eurostat intends to produce a first (pre-) report on the EU situation concerning SDGs by the end of 2016.